

## Explanations by JanieTattoos

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**Summary:** El and Max have a much needed heart-to-heart, away from the boys and Hopper. Slight implied Mileven. Set a few weeks after El closes the gate. This is my first Stranger Things fanfic, so comments are very much appreciated!

## Explanations

A/N: Hello there! So, I've had this Stranger Things blog ever since I finished watching season 1 in September 2016, and I've never really used it. However, I want to change that! I've written fanfic for other shows before, and I love Stranger Things and all of its glorious fanfiction, so I thought I'd maybe give it a go. So, this is my first fic! I hope you enjoy, and if you do, then please share it and give me your thoughts on it 3

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Once, twice, three times.

El turned down the television to hear the knock again, to make sure that it was correct. It had been a couple of weeks now since she had closed the gate; she was pretty confident that the Bad Men were gone for good, but Hopper wasn't so sure. He had told her again and again that they couldn't take any chances - she still had to abide by the rules. She still wasn't allowed to be stupid.

Once, twice, three times.

Instead of opening it with a slight jerk of her head, El decided to get up and open the door manually. She checked the watch that Hopper had given her. Four-two-six, it read. Hopper had told her before he'd left for the station that morning that he wouldn't be home until five-three-zero. Which could only mean one thing - Mike was behind the door.

Although the Wheeler kid still had a long way to go before Hopper could accept Mike and El's blossoming relationship, he had enough respect for the boy to take baby steps, one of which was allowing Mike to visit the cabin (whilst Hopper was also home, of course) and to also teach him the coded knock. El's heart started to thump a little bit as she realised what Mike was doing. He was visiting her when Hopper wasn't home. The thought made her lips turn up into a grin. Holding her breath, she opened the door, expecting to find him there, wearing that smile that he saved just for her. But instead, she was greeted by a girl with long, red hair and a skateboard underneath her arm. Max looked up when the door swung open.

"Hi, El!" she said brightly, trying to put on a brave face. The tension between the two girls had yet to be diffused, despite Max being as friendly as she could possibly be. The telekinetic girl hadn't given her any hints as to why she had instantly disliked Max the moment they met, and Max was so close to giving up guessing. This was her last shot - if El didn't accept her after this visit, then she didn't know what else she could do to change her mind.

El's facial expression arranged into one of disappointment and dislike. "You're not Mike," she said matter-of-factly.

Max resisted the urge to reply with a sarcastic comment. She shuffled her feet. "No, I'm not," she said with an awkward laugh. *This is gonna be fun*, she thought to herself.

"Why are you here?" El asked unamused. "How did you know where I was?"

"Um, well, Mike helped me out and told me how to get here, and he told me about the secret knock and everything..." Max replied, trailing off. She was sensing that this girl wanted her to get off her doorstep.

Max sighed. "Look, I know we haven't had a chance to talk, since, you know, *everything* that happened that night, but I thought it would be nice if you and I took the chance to get to know each other. And then maybe we could be friends."

Max looked down at her shoes, expecting El to say "no" and slam the door in her face. But the door stayed open.

After a few moments, El spoke up. "You can come in," she caved with a slight sigh, already walking back into the cabin.

"Oh... Great!" Max said, trying to keep it together.

She followed El into the cabin, and with a slight jerk of El's head, the door closed and locked itself once again. Max took in her surroundings as she placed her skateboard beside the door. The cabin was a lot smaller than she had anticipated; she'd heard from Mike that Hopper had hidden El here for over a year. Now that she was

seeing the place for herself, Max wondered how *anyone* could live there long-term. The curtains were drawn, so that hardly any sunlight was coming through. It was dim and had no decorations, photos or any variation of colour. Max pitied El, and wondered how she had managed to cope in this place for so long, especially when Hopper wasn't there most of the time.

She wandered over to the couch to where El was sitting, staring at her. Max sat down on the couch, leaving a considerable distance between them. The pair sat in silence for a few moments. It was clear that El wasn't going to initiate conversation, so Max accepted that she would have to be the one to start talking.

"Okay, I'm just gonna come right out and say it," Max sighed, forcing herself to look at El, who was staring down at the blanket draped over her. Max took a deep breath before her next sentence.

"Why don't you like me?"

The sheer bluntness of the redhead's question took El aback and it forced her to look at Max, eyes wide. She continued to stare at her before replying in a soft, quiet voice.

"I saw you with Mike in the big room. At school."

Max looked at El quizzically. "Wha- What big room? When was this?"

El sighed, obviously struggling to explain something that even she herself didn't fully understand.

"Before I closed the gate. I went to school to see Mike. He didn't see me. I saw you and Mike in a big room. I watched you through the doors. You were on your skateboard, and I made you fall. Then I ran back home."

Max sat for a few moments, still confused. Then, all of a sudden, the memory clicked back into place.

"Oh," she said, "you saw us in the *gym*! I remember now."

"Gym?" El asked.

"It's where everyone at school plays sports and stuff," Max explained. She paused for a few seconds before continuing. "Wait, hang on. *You* were the reason why I fell off my board?"

El looked at Max, a slight tinge of guilt in her eyes. "Yes."

Max re-positioned herself on the couch, pulling her knees close to her chest. "Why did you do it?" she asked, shocked.

El closed her eyes for a brief moment. "When I saw you with Mike, I... I didn't... I didn't feel good. I felt..."

El struggled to find the right word.

"*Jealous?*" Max offered, a slow smirk spreading across her lips.

"What's jealous?" El asked. Maybe this could be her new word of the day.

"It's when you see something that someone else has and you want it too," Max explained. "Except, I don't want Mike. You just thought I did."

"But Mike was smiling at you," El protested, her voice serious. "And you were smiling at him... I thought he liked you more than he liked me."

Max then broke into a fit of laughter. "Are you kidding me? Me and *Mike?*" Max wiped tears away from her eyes, her cheeks now a rosy pink. "Oh El, that's a good one."

El looked more confused than ever. "Why is that funny?"

Max let out a few more laughs. "Because it's *Mike*! He's *never* liked me, right from the moment we met. Not in *that* way, at least. Trust me, El, you're the only girl he likes. He completely adores you. You have nothing to be worried about. And that's a promise."

"Promise," El repeated with a smile, a content feeling spreading throughout her entire body. However, she now felt bad for how mean she had been to Max since their first meeting. She had been wrong this entire time. Mike didn't like Max. He liked *her*, *El*. And *she* liked

him. *A lot*. That thought made her smile even more.

"Sorry," El said quietly, forcing herself to look Max in the eye. "I'm sorry for being mean to you."

"It's alright," Max replied, giving El a smile in return. "So... friends?"

Max held out her hand to El, just like their first meeting, when El had walked right past her without so much as a glance in her direction. She braced herself for another possible rejection.

However, to the redhead's surprise, El nodded with a smile and accepted Max's hand, shaking it lightly. "Friends," El agreed.

They held on to each other for a few moments, before letting go. "Well, I gotta go," Max said, pushing herself off the couch. "I told my mom I would be home not long after 5, so I should get going, otherwise I'm gonna be in deep shit."

El nodded. "Okay," she replied, getting up too. "Will I see you on Saturday? At Will's house?"

"Of course!" Max nodded enthusiastically, moving towards the cabin door. "Although we're probably spend all afternoon playing that dumb board game that the boys are obsessed with."

"I don't mind it," El said truthfully. Of course, El didn't have the first clue about how to play D&D, but she didn't care. In all honesty, she didn't care how she and the others spent their afternoons; the only thing that mattered to her was that after a year of being alone, she was finally allowed to see her friends again on a regular basis.

"Okay, so, I'll see you then?" Max said, grabbing her skateboard and opening the door.

"Yes," El replied. Saturday was two days away, but it felt like forever to her.

"Alright. Bye then!" Max said. She gave El a smile, which El kindly returned. Max considered giving her a hug too, but decided that it was too risky. She had only just gotten El on her side, and she didn't want to jepordise that by being too far-forward too quickly. *Baby*

*steps*, she told herself. So instead, Max turned on her heels and walked back into the forest, her red hair swinging behind her.

El closed the door behind her, breathing a sigh of relief. She now had her first girl friend. And *Mike liked her*.

Saturday couldn't come any faster.